AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-18 (canceled)

Claim 19 (currently amended): A system comprising:

a first network having at least one client connected thereto;

a second network;

said first and second networks having different protocols;

a network communications coupler connected to both said first network and said second network;

said at least one client sending a plurality of commands to said coupler and designating at least one of said plurality of commands as a delayed response command;

said coupler for storing one or more instances of a command interpreter, said command interpreter providing a command/reply interface for data and command exchange between one of said at least one clients and said second network and said coupler also for storing a first instance of a template, said template associated with one or more instances of said command interpreter, said first instance used to store in said coupler at least one of said delayed response commands during execution of said at least one delayed response command by said coupler; and

for storing a second instance of said template, said second instance used to store in said coupler a reply to said at least one delayed response command executed by said coupler until said reply is retrieved by said client.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The system of claim 19 further comprising a distributed control system connected to said second network.

Claim 21 (previously presented): The system of claim 19 wherein said at least one client designates by means of a predetermined key provided by said at least one client which of said plurality of commands sent to said coupler are said delayed response commands, said at least one client using said

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predetermined key value to retrieve a reply to said at least one delayed response command executed by said coupler.

Claim 22 (currently amended): A system comprising:

a first network having at least one client connected thereto;

a distributed control system comprising a second network;

said first and second networks having different protocols;

a network communications coupler connected to both said first network and said second network;

said at least one client sending a plurality of commands to said coupler and designating by means of a predetermined key value provided by said at least one client at least one of said plurality of commands as a delayed response command, said at least one client using said predetermined key value to retrieve a reply to said at least one delayed response command executed by said coupler;

said coupler for <u>storing one or more instances of a command interpreter, said command interpreter providing a command/reply interface for data and command exchange between one of said at least one clients and said second network and said coupler also for</u> storing a first instance of a template, <u>said template associated with one or more instances of said command interpreter,</u> said first instance used to store in said coupler at least one of said delayed response commands during execution of said at least one delayed response command by said coupler; and

for storing a second instance of said template, said second instance used to store in said coupler a reply to said at least one delayed response command executed by said coupler until said reply is retrieved by said client.

Claim 23 (new): A method for use with those of a plurality of commands sent by at least one client on a network connected to a network communications coupler designated by said at least one client as delayed response commands comprising:

storing in said coupler one or more instances of a command interpreter, said command interpreter providing a command/reply

interface for data and command exchange between one of said at least one clients and a control network connected to said coupler;

storing in said coupler a first instance of a template, said template associated with one of said one or more stored instances of said command interpreter, said first instance used to store in said coupler at least one of said delayed response commands during execution of said at least one delayed response command by said coupler; and

storing in said coupler a second instance of said template, said second instance used to store in said coupler a reply to said at least one delayed response command executed by said coupler until said reply is retrieved by said client.

Claim 24 (new): The method of claim 23 wherein said template has a declaration having one template parameter class in the parameter list of said template and one or more statements defining said template.

Claim 25 (new): The method of claim 24 wherein said one or more statements defining said template include a pointer of said template parameter class.

Claim 26 (new): The method of claim 25 wherein said one or more statements defining said template further include enumerated special values for designating boundary and special conditions and one or more methods.

Claim 27 (new): The method of claim 26 wherein said one or more methods statements comprise constructor, destructor and access methods.

Claim 28 (new): The method of claim 24 wherein said template comprises:

a putEntry function that stores a pointer to an object and associates said pointer with a key value supplied by said at least one client;

a getEntry function that permits removal of an arbitrary pointer by specification of a value that matches said key value supplied by said at least one client; and

a checkEntry function that permits retrieval of said arbitrary pointer by specification of a value that matches said key value supplied by said at least one client.

Claim 29 (new): The method of claim 23 further comprising defining for said template a declaration having one template parameter class in the parameter list of said template and one or more statements defining said template.

Claim 30 (new): The method of claim 29 further comprising defining for said one or statements a pointer of said one template parameter class, enumerated special values for designating boundary and special conditions, and one or more methods.

Claim 31 (new): The method of claim 30 further comprising defining for said one or statements that are method statements methods selected from constructor, destructor and access methods.

Claim 32 (new): The method of claim 23 wherein said at least one client designates which of said plurality of commands are delayed response commands by means of a predetermined key value provided by said at least one client.